

69



Mr David Carlton
Mr John Palmer — Presented by
Jno Mallinore

SERMON,

DELIVERED

IN THE WEST PARISH OF LONDONDERRY,

MAY 5, 1816.

OCCASIONED

By the Death

ON

JOHN PINKERTON, ESQ.

BY WILLIAM MORRISON, A. M.

Pastor of the Church in said Parish.

Published at the Request of the Parish.

CONCORD :
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1817.

REV. SIR,

At a meeting of the inhabitants of the West Parish in Londonderry, on the 5th day of August, 1816, it was unanimously voted, to request a copy of your appropriate Discourse, delivered on the Sabbath immediately succeeding the death of Elder John Pinkerton—And we being chosen a committee for that purpose, do accordingly request, in behalf of said Parish, a copy of the same for the press.

WILLIAM ANDERSON,
WILLIAM GREGG,
JAMES AIKIN.

Rev. William Morrison.

Londonderry, August 13, 1816.

GENTLEMEN,

Relying on the candor of my beloved Parish, to excuse imperfections in the following Discourse, that may have arisen from the very impaired state of my health, it is humbly and affectionately submitted, according to your polite request, for publication.

WILLIAM MORRISON.

Mr. William Anderson,

Col. William Gregg,

Elder James Aikin.

Sermon.

JOB V. 26.

Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in in his season.

GREAT and precious are the promises made to the righteous, in the holy Scriptures, for their support and comfort, in all the troubles and vicissitudes of life. We have an unparalleled cluster of them, in the preceding context. God shall be with them in six troubles, yea in seven; there shall no evil touch them. And as he is with them in the changes of life, he will not forsake them in death.

As the promises made to the righteous are great and precious, the emblems under which they are distinguished from the wicked, are also very great, precious, and well chosen. Both the promise and emblem are combined in the last end of the good man, in the words of our text, "Thou shalt come to thy grave in a *full age*." Long life, as far as it shall serve for God's glory, and the good of his people, is a promised blessing. While the wicked are cut off in the midst of their days, the real christian has the prospect of long life; which is the first commandment with promise. We have also the emblem or similitude, under which he comes to his grave, *like a shock of*

CORN. While the wicked are compared to briars and thorns, as nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned, the righteous are compared to shocks of corn; the most precious production of all that springs out of the earth. Grain is the staff of life. This emblem is farther beautiful, "coming in in its season." The wicked are like untimely and blasted fruit, too late to be saved for any use, and exposed to the inclemency of winter, of chilling snows, and killing frosts, tempests and storms, that destroy them. But the righteous are taken in from the evil that is to come upon the wicked.

In farther contemplation of these words for our instruction, I shall,

I. Consider the propriety of the emblem, under which good men are represented in the text.

II. Show why good men in death are compared to shocks of corn, coming in in their season.

After which I shall,

III. Point out some useful lessons to be learned from this view of the subject.

I am,

I. To illustrate the propriety of the emblem, under which good men are represented in the text, "*shocks of corn.*"

This is not the only place, where good people are compared to grain, corn, or wheat. Our Savior,

who taught by plain and apt parables and similitudes, represents the wicked as tares, and the righteous as wheat. The apostle, speaking of the doctrine of the resurrection from the dead, compares man's body to grain sown, "It is sown in corruption and dishonor," &c. So here they are compared to corn coming in in its season. The propriety of this metaphor appears from the following considerations.

i. The great worth and value of grain, evinces the propriety of the comparison. Of all that comes from our earth, of vegetable kind, grain is the most valuable, and is the best support for man or beast. Are not true christians, the excellent ones of the earth, often means of preserving others, precious in God's sight? "Since thou wast precious, thou hast been honorable"—They are called *God's chosen ones*—*Jewels of value*—*Diadems of beauty*—*All glorious within*—*Crowns of glory*—*Kings and priests unto God and the Lamb*—*God's husbandry*—*His vineyard and his heritage*—*His children*—*Bride and spouse*—And on their account, the field, and the world, and the tares that an enemy has spread among them, are spared until the day of judgment. On the other hand, the wicked are represented under every disagreeable metaphor, and as destructive animals; as lions,—leopards,—wolves,—foxes spoiling the vines;—as serpents,—vipers,—and

their influence and conduct like the poison of asps, and the venom of dragons. One sinner destroys much good, and is frequently the mean of bringing swift destruction on himself and others, "like fire brands, arrows, and death."

2. Where grain is sowed, much pains, toil, and labor, are bestowed. Hence God's church is called a "garden enclosed—A spring shut up—A fountain sealed—God's husbandry, or vineyard—Walled around—A tower built—Stones collected." Does not this exhibit the pains and means that God is at with his people, in all generations, and raising up instruments for spiritual agriculture, to make them fruitful in all holy obedience and good works? One plants, another waters. All the institutions which he has appointed, under the law or gospel, are on their account, and for their sake. The care and instruction of the patriarchs and prophets, apostles and ministers of the gospel, and missionaries sent far and wide over the earth, are for their sake, and to bring his sons from afar, and his daughters from the ends of the earth.

3. They are justly compared to grain on this account, that, all the pains and toil bestowed on the ground, are to no purpose, without the fructifying showers of rain, and the cherishing beams of the sun, descend from heaven to make the seed take root and grow. Does not this strongly

indicate the necessity of divine influences to make the christian grow? It is *then* God performs his blessed promise of being as the dew unto Israel—It is *then* the church “shall grow as the lily, and cast forth her roots as Lebanon—It is *then* that her branches shall spread, and her beauty be as the olive tree, and her smell as Lebanon—And it is *then* that Israel revives as the corn, and grows as the vine, and the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon.”

4. Grain must be separated from the chaff for final usefulness. Hence we are informed, when the Son of Man shall come in his glory, before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats; and that he shall come, whose fan is in his hand, and thoroughly purge his floor, and gather the wheat into the garner; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire. The royal penman informs us, in the first Psalm, that the wicked are like the chaff which the wind driveth away.

I will add,

5. Grain is taken care of, and brought in, in season. It is out till it is ripe, but not till it is blasted or rotten. The length of time for grain to ripen, is various. Some sorts ripen much sooner than others. And so it is with christians and good men in different periods of the world.

The longevity of the patriarchs was different, one from another : and all of them very different from what the life of man was in succeeding ages. And the length of man's days now is different one from another. Some die young in years, to what others do ; but all who die in the Lord, are ripe, let them be young or old. But the more aged may with peculiar propriety be said to come in, ripe, or like shocks of corn, in full age, and season too. Full age is put for length of days.

Query—What might be the reason for the longevity of the patriarchs? Should not this question be too great a digression to merit an answer, I would observe several reasons might be given. The longevity of the patriarchs greatly supplied the want of either testimony or history of God's church, until that was granted in the days of Moses in the written law of God. The testimony of saving truth, and the history of God's church, were handed down in a simple and concise manner, by easy and short transitions.

Adam was cotemporary with Methuselah two hundred and forty-five years ; and Methuselah lived nearly six hundred years cotemporary with Noah ; and Abraham, the father of the faithful, was fifty-eight years of age at the time of Noah's death. Abraham doubtless committed the precious truths of religion to Isaac, and Isaac to Jacob, and

Jacob to his offspring. And we have sufficient evidence, that it was but four hundred and thirty years after the ordinance of circumcision was given to Abraham, till the law was given to Moses ; and he, by the pen of inspiration, then wrote the history of the church, as made evident, and strengthened, by the cotemporary and corroborating testimony of the patriarchs from Adam to Moses, who was the minister of the law, given him from God, upon tables of stone.

Another reason for the longevity of the patriarchs was, the probable simplicity of their mode of living. They were strangers to luxury and intemperance. They had not refined upon the delicacies and luxuries of life, so as to convert their food, or drink, into slow poison, to shorten their days, as many now do. Besides, the world was but thinly inhabited ; and to multiply and replenish the earth, was a commanded duty ; and the Proprietor of time combined these reasons, as causes, to produce the intended effects, by the longevity of the patriarchs, who, like our temperate and deceased friend, came to their graves in a full age, and like shocks of corn coming in in their season. This leads us,

II. To show why good men, in death, are compared to shocks of corn *“coming in in their season.”*

1. They are compared to shocks, because their souls are bound up in the bundle of life, set up with and united to Christ in that mystical union, which death cannot break; and they are united to one another, in the band of love and affection. They are the subjects of one faith, they are the children of one Father, the property of one Lord, and finally forming one society in heaven. Hence spiritual Jerusalem is said to be compactly built together.

2. They are compared to shocks of corn coming in in season, because they are ripe, and have received all the benefit and advantages of being out in the field of this world, necessary to their being brought in for God's use and service forever. The good man's days are prolonged as far in years, as is most conducive to God's glory, and the believers' good. On this ground the apostle says, "We know, that all things work together for good;" and expressly declares, that even the momentary afflictions of time, work for us a far more exceeding and an eternal weight of glory.

Many things in the evening of life combine to ripen the christian for the grave. The infirmities of advanced years—the groans of the earthly tabernacle, being burdened—the wearisome nights and months of vanity he experiences, together with the Pisgah views he is favored with of the inheritance beyond the Jordan of death,

serve to wean his affections from earth, and to break his last ties to the things of time ; until, by increased gravitation, in nearer approaches to heaven, he drops from the stalk of life, like the ripe grain coming in in its season.

Thus, while the wicked, like unripe fruit, are forcibly shaken off by the irresistible storm of death, and driven away in their wickedness ; the righteous are resigned and submissive to the will of God, and are willing, at the appointed time, to part with all terrestrial enjoyments—Hence the righteous are sometimes held up as ready and even longing for death. Good old Simeon, having enjoyed all the advantages that earth could give him, goes to the Proprietor of his life and time, and asks liberty to die—“ Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.”

3. Coming in in season implies they are not out too long. Blasted fruit is often seen sticking on the tree, exposed to the inclemency of tempests even in the dead of winter. This is not a faint emblem of the disposition of wicked men, in old age, who are strongly reluctant to pass the limits of time, and cleave fast to perishing enjoyments, and are ready to exclaim, “ Hast thou found me, oh mine enemy !” If the days of such are spared a little longer, they are only left as awful monuments of the divine forbearance ;

and as victims of divine vengeance, like the barren fig-tree, to be soon cut down, as cumberers of the ground.

But it may be asked, Do not good men often live so long, and loaded with so many infirmities, as to be (one would say) altogether useless, and an incumbrance to others? To this we reply, It is not for us to set limits to the usefulness of good men. For however frail and infirm a good man may be, he may be still very useful, in the exercise of an exemplary disposition—of submission—of faith—of patience—of benevolence—and of brotherly love; waiting all the days of his appointed time, until his change come. Thus Simeon waited—thus Job waited; and may I not appeal to the knowledge of my audience, that notwithstanding the very useful life of our deceased friend in his youth and prime, yet it was in his advanced years, and under frailty of body, though perfectly sound in mind, that he did those acts of benevolence, and public benefit, which will transmit the fame of his usefulness to future generations, and elevate the town of Londonderry to the enjoyment of privileges perhaps beyond a parallel in the State.

It may also be observed, that the righteous may be useful in extreme old age, as means of averting judgments and calamities that sometimes destroy nations. It is evident the tares were spared

for the wheat's sake ; and it is equally obvious, that, had there been ten righteous persons in Sodom, it had been spared ; but because there was not, it was destroyed.

4. I observe, good men are said to come in season, because they are fit for the use for which they are designed. Why does the farmer take so much pains in cultivating and manuring the soil for grain to grow ? Why so much labor in fencing the field, and watching it with care, that no destructive animal break in to injure it ? And why, in season, is he so punctual in reaping, gathering, and binding it in bundles ; and to receive the last advantage of the field, he forms it into shocks ? Is it not because it is fit for the use he had in view, when he began the process of labor and toil necessary to bring it to perfection in harvest ?

To illustrate the propriety of the metaphor, may I not ask, with reverence, why does God choose any of the human race, and bestow so much labor and pains, to bring them to repentance ? Why create them anew ? Why work in them the work of faith with power ? Why are they watered with divine influences, corrected, instructed, protected, and reared up in the fear, nurture, and admonition of the Lord, and preserved even into old age through many infirmities, and finally favored with an unstinged death

and vanquished grave, but to fit them for the inheritance of the saints in light, to qualify and ripen them for the employment of the general assembly and church of the first-born in heaven? This was the use he intended them for, when he sowed the seed of grace in their hearts at first, to glorify his name in ascriptions of everlasting praise, adoration, and worship, to him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb forever and ever. The appointed time is come, their summer of life is over, their ripening days and harvest are finished, and they are brought in and are saved.

III. I shall now conclude with a few reflections by way of improvement.

1. We may see, in the light of what has been said, the great propriety of having our affections weaned from the things of time, and set upon the superior concerns of an eternal state. Here we have no continuing city. The life of the oldest and best men here, is but short and transitory; only for a season. We sprout forth in the spring of childhood and youth, flourish and bloom a little in the prime and summer of life, and are soon cut down in harvest, and gathered home to a state of being that shall never have an end. Here we are “but strangers and sojourners on the earth, as all our fathers were.” Let not, then, our affections be glued to a country where we tarry only as strangers for a night, and through

which we pass, and to which we shall never return. All undue attachments to earthly things will tend to unfit the mind for a dying bed. But if the earthly mind is subdued, and brought into subjection to the instructions of mortality, it will soften the pillow of death, and scatter the gloom of the grave, and fix our affections beyond the limits of time; and we shall drop from it, like the ripe fruit fitted for our Father's use in glory.

2. In the light of these truths we may learn the superior excellency of the gospel, and the astonishing efficacy of divine grace, thus converting death ("nature's supreme evil") into a great good, and making men willing to die. Death was not in the original constitution of our nature; therefore we shudder and shrink back from it, as an enemy. It awakens all the laws of instinct and reason, for our preservation. But the gospel of Christ disarms death of its sting, and the grave of its victory, and reconciles the real christian to the dissolution of the earthly house of this tabernacle, and enables him to triumph over death, saying, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" And to anticipate the bright morning of a resurrection, when that which is sown in weakness, corruption, and dishonor, shall be raised in power, in incorruption, and in glory; when momentary ages

are sunk into oblivion, and the soul is filled with joy unspeakable, in the full enjoyment of God to all eternity.

3. We may learn the great propriety of examining ourselves, as to our increase in holiness, and every christian virtue. We often examine the progress of our crops in the field, and speak of them with serious discouragement, if very backward; and if flourishing, we look for a joyful harvest. If we attend with serious concern to the progress of the fruits of the field, to save us from want against the more severe season of the year, which continues but a few months; with what superior concern should we attend to growth in grace and ripeness in holiness; that when the summer of this life is over, and the harvest of time at an end, we may be saved from the awful inclemency of a long eternity! There can be no inquiry of greater interest, no scrutiny of equal or even comparative value, to that of examining ourselves, of our faith, and love to God, of our preparation for death, and the solemnities of an exchange of worlds! "There is no work, no knowledge, or devicee, or wisdom, in the grave whither thou goest." But as death leaves us, judgment will find us.

4. We learn the vast difference there is between the death of the righteous and the death of the wicked. The wicked is driven away in his wick-

edness ; but the righteous hath hope in his death. Hence, "mark the perfect man, and behold the righteous ; for the latter end of that man is peace"—His soul shall be bound up in the bundle of life. But woe unto the wicked, it shall be ill with him ; he shall be "burned like chaff in unquenchable fire"—The reward of his hand shall be given him.

How pleasing to contemplate the memory of the just ! for they are blessed. The excellency of good men shows the malignant nature and wickedness of the wicked, in an irresistible point of view. The lustre of good men's characters when they are gone, *still* casts a light upon others around, and serves to show what their survivors are. It exhibits equally to public view, their virtues and vices, their degeneracy and their worth.

Were I in this connexion to form an obituary note of the character of Major John Pinkerton, an Elder in the church in Londonderry, I would say, that he was a steadfast friend to religion and learning ; a lover of peace, and of all good men ; pleased at the prosperity of others, and grieved at their woes ; inflexibly firm in all habits of virtue ; eminently exemplary for humility, temperance, industry, and care ; just and benevolent to all, flattering to none ; generous to the distressed, and kind to the poor ; a good neighbor, jealous of his honor, and an absolute enemy to all dishonesty,

deception, and guile—He saw, with christian submission, seven children, desirable youths, his whole family, laid in the dust.—He bore, with fortitude, the infirmities of advanced years, and came to his “grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in in his season.”—He was a public blessing to the town where he lived; and generations yet to come will rise up and call him blessed.

In the final adjustment of his property to the town and parishes, he discovered a spirit of impartial justice (as he called it) peculiar to himself. He observed, he had public dealings with the inhabitants of every part of the town, and wished to do them all equal justice, with respect to the institutions of public instruction.

To those who were distressed by the late fires in Portsmouth, he sent one hundred and twenty dollars. To those of the same description by the fire in Newburyport, he sent sixty dollars. And on all such occasions his heart and hands were equally open.

Time would fail me to enumerate his various acts of benevolence and charity.—In his death, widows have lost a benefactor—their children, a father—orphans, a shield—the poorman, if honest and industrious, a friend—this church, a ruling Elder—and the town of Londonderry, the man whose memory they shall ever delight to honor,

while a spark of gratitude is alive in their hearts. The tongue that would detract his reputation, must be hardened with crime. And while we sympathize with bereaved connexions in general, on the death of so good a relative, we trust that John P. M'Gregore, the benevolent and only grand-child of the deceased, shall ever be respected and beloved by the people of Londonderry, for the generosity and goodness of his heart, in the coincidence of his mind with his grandfather's last will and testament, in the disposition of such a large share of property for the public good.*—And while we acknowledge with gratitude the obligations we are under to respect the memory of Major John Pinkerton, and to improve the advantages resulting from his generosity to us and to our children for our spiritual welfare, let us imitate his example in being economical, industrious, wise, and good.

* Major John Pinkerton has given and bequeathed to each of the two religious societies in Londonderry, not far from eight thousand dollars, for the support of the Gospel; and twelve thousand as a fund to the Academy lately incorporated in this town by the name of the Pinkerton Academy.

and with all due respect
notwithstanding the above
we will
not proceed
with our
plan to
proceed

in this
country and therefore we consider
ourselves and our friends
fully satisfied
and do
not
desire
to
proceed



